

AMERICAN POLICY AND ARAB-ISRAELI PEACE

Our Course in the Light of Near East Realities

HAL LEHRMAN

DURING a recent visit to Israel this writer spent an evening with a group of army commanders. Their senior officer gazed toward the nearby hills of Jordan and bitterly said: "In Palestinian times the Arabs sometimes broke out and began to kill. If the British Mandate police interfered, the Arabs stopped. If the British didn't, the Arabs paraded the streets and shouted 'The government is with us!'—and killed more Jews. Today the Arabs are killing people again. This time, the UN is in charge. But the UN does not interfere. It gives the Arabs microphones. It lets the killers make speeches. And over there"—he gestured at the night-shrouded border—"the Arabs now are shouting 'The world is with us!' With such incentive to murder, why should they ever make peace?"

This officer felt perhaps more intimate outrage than most Israelis. As a child, in a remote kibbutz, he had seen his whole family slaughtered by marauding Arabs. Yet, as a man and citizen, his views reflect a national attitude. There are few Israelis without a

sense of personal injury from Arab action, and not many more who do not blame the UN—and the United States—for, willingly or unwillingly, encouraging Arab truculence.

They know that the United States is Israel's friend. They are intensely pro-American by instinct, kinship, need, and gratitude. But in one important corner of their collective mind they tend to identify the United States with the UN, and with American military personnel holding prominent posts in armistice commissions. Many Israelis rightly or wrongly attribute unfavorable UN behavior to Washington's direct instigation. And, entirely apart from the UN, the conviction is deep in Israel that the United States, as the dominant power in the Middle East, pursues policies whose results are often unhappy for Israel. Since the Arabs profess to read the same American policies in an exactly opposite light, the United States finds herself resented by both sides.

IN THIS three-way argument, it is important to note and stress at once, for American readers, that Israel and the United States agree on several large and fundamental principles. These principles are relevant to the Israeli-Arab dispute, essential to the American national interest in the Middle East—and rejected by the Arabs.

Washington and Jerusalem accept in full the need of the following for the *entire* south-east Mediterranean area:

1. Introduction or continuation of far-reaching programs for democratic social reform and economic improvement.
2. Restoration or maintenance of peace and stability within and among all the countries.
3. Recognition of the common menace of Soviet totalitarianism.
4. Organization of a regional defense against that menace.

Furthermore the United States—although pro-Israel opinion sometimes suspects Wash-

DEEP disagreement exists between the United States and Israel on ways to reduce Holy Land tensions. Each side believes that the other's "mistakes" are inflaming the Arab-Israeli crisis. HAL LEHRMAN, just returned from his third trip through the Middle East, here reports the Israeli and American viewpoints. In a previous article, "Kibya, Jerusalem, and the River Jordan," in April, he discussed some of the more local issues of disagreement between Israel and the West. Mr. Lehrman, born in New York City in 1911, studied at Cornell and the Sorbonne. After staff posts with the Associated Press, Havas, *Newsweek*, and other publications, he served as wartime director of the Office of War Information in Turkey. Since then he has free-lanced for many newspapers and magazines, lectured, and written two books, *Russia's Europe* (1947) and *Israel: The Beginning and Tomorrow* (1952).

ington of the contrary—is sure that Israel is in the Middle East to stay. No responsible American policy-maker envisages the possibility, or desirability, of Israel's disappearance. The United States knows that this would contribute nothing to the strength or unity of the region, and would create problems as grievous as those which now prevail.

The Arabs, on the other hand, are less inclined today to acknowledge Israel's existence as permanent than at any time since their 1948 invasion of the infant state. They do not desire peace. They see Israel, not the Soviets, as their common enemy. They feel no compelling need to prepare against Communist aggression. The attitudes of Arab leaders toward the economic and social betterment of their people range from lukewarmness to total antagonism.

THE disagreements between Israel and the United States are disagreements between friends, not foes. Nevertheless, they cannot be lightly treated. They carry a high emotional charge: the strong fear on the part of both the United States and Israel that the other's errors, if persisted in, may produce an explosion—not between themselves, but between Israel and the Arabs.

One should distinguish between two categories of disagreements in Israeli-American relations. The first type is what might be called "classic"—being general disagreements, not over a particular issue or of limited duration, but long-time and springing from prime causes. These causes are the emergence of Israel, the Arab refusal to accept her, her own need to survive, and the American need to fit the Arabs somehow into free-world planning. These differences, manifest from the start, have not shrunk perceptibly, since the situation which created them has not essentially changed.

The second type of Israeli-American disagreements arise from the first, but are tactical, specific, immediate, and concerned with day-to-day issues. They shift ground as other elements in the particular dispute shift ground and the dispute itself moves forward. In the current phase of the Arab-Israeli crisis, observers see a tendency for the United States and Israeli positions to converge tactically. Each tactical position, however, remains attached to its unchangeable "classic" base. The gap of disagreement, though re-

duced, is still wide enough to cause dangerous tension and frequent deadlock.

The long-time disagreements are over two questions. Are the Arabs capable of regional cooperation? If so, how enlist their cooperation?

Without defining the form or degree of such cooperation, the United States affirms that the Arabs are not only capable of it, but indispensable to it. The United States proposes to get their participation by persuasion and conciliation.

Israel strongly doubts that the Arabs, given the nature of their present leadership and social structures, can be organized at all for a positive contribution to regional unity. And even if they can, Israel believes that the application of sweet reasonableness and nothing else to the Arabs will fail.

A DEPENDABLE partner, the Israelis contend, should have a good previous record, an awareness of the partnership's common objective, and a degree of stability at home. He should also give evidence of good faith.

Where, or when, has the Arab world cooperated substantially in any large-scale economic or political undertaking sponsored by the West? Nowhere, reply the Israelis, except in oil exploitation—an operation conducted with private Western companies, not governments, for the profit of native rulers and regimes, not of their peoples. Arab response to Western offers of economic aid has been grudging. In World War II the Arab leaders showed, at best, indifference to the Allied cause; at worst, as in Iraq, they sided with the Axis. The Arabs are incapable, it is asserted, of cooperating even among themselves—except for negative purposes. The British conjured up the Arab League in hopes that it would help unify the Middle East and assist the British in controlling that area. The League has produced Arab unity on nothing except antagonism to Israel and the West—including the British.

Is the Arab world anti-Soviet? Communist parties, it is true, have been outlawed, but mainly because they seemed to be against the local regime, not because they were a conspiracy in favor of a foreign power. Indeed, the Communist parties themselves in Arab countries are often muddled in doctrine, ignorant of Marxism, and even of current Muscovite gospel. In this they re-

flect the greater ignorance of the Arab ruling class. For most Arab potentates and effendis, Moscow is very remote geographically and intellectually—so remote as almost not to exist, certainly not as a threat. Arabs have encountered Russians at the UN and, if anything, liked them, as Jordan's parliament recently indicated by sending formal thanks to Andrei Vishinsky.

No, declare the Israelis, the only "menace" the Arabs see is Israel—"imperialist, ambitious, aggressive Zionism." The Arabs proclaim this on every occasion. Western efforts to secure Arab participation in an anti-Soviet defense system have been and will continue futile, Israelis predict. The Arab rulers are so innocent of Soviet totalitarianism's true meaning for themselves—their total destruction—that they sometimes even declare readiness to throw themselves into Moscow's arms rather than make peace with the real "enemy," the State of Israel.

DO THE Arabs have enough internal stability to participate in cooperative international ventures? Recent headlines from the Middle East, Israelis point out, say no. Lebanon at one recent juncture was changing cabinets almost daily. In Syria and Egypt the local strong men—on whom the United States had openly reckoned as pillars of reform and regional defense—have exposed themselves as straw-men. Where is the Syrian savior, Adib Shishakli? Where is Egypt's great hope, Mohammed Naguib?

The Israelis invite world opinion to compare the Arab with the Israeli picture. When David Ben Gurion retired as prime minister, a new government came tranquilly and democratically into office after inter-party negotiations and a parliamentary vote of confidence. In the Arab world, ten kings, presidents, and premiers have been assassinated, exiled, or otherwise violently deposed since 1945.

The Israelis call attention to the incessant Arab propaganda charge that it is Israel who threatens regional stability by lawlessness, terrorism, and territorial ambitions. Was there ever a better opportunity for Israel to prove this charge than during the late convulsions in Egypt or Syria? With the Syrian defense forces split down the middle between Shishakli and his rivals, what effective resistance could have been offered to an Israeli

invasion? Could anything have prevented capture of Damascus by the Israeli army? The occasion for adventure with little risk was as golden as in 1951, when King Abdullah's assassination threw Arab Jerusalem into anarchy. The Israeli garrison in the New City could then have settled the problem of "divided" Jerusalem in a single afternoon. But no garrison marched. There was not even an emergency mobilization, although this would have been mere prudence in view of the chaotic situation on the other side of the border.

Where are similar proofs of good faith, and active will toward peace, the Israelis demand, from the Arabs? Defeated in a war they started, the Arabs obtained armistice agreements in which they pledged to negotiate a final peace. Yet in five years they have not moved one inch toward such negotiations. Instead, as one of the absolute prerequisites to peace talks, they call for Israel's repatriation of "a million refugees"—who would never, Israelis contend, have become refugees if the Arab League had not made war on Israel and then provoked panicky flight.

The Arabs further expose their bad faith, say the Israelis, by insisting on repatriation when they know that: (a) it is a social and economic impossibility for Israel to comply, because the society and economy which supported the former inhabitants have vanished; (b) it would create an intolerable security risk by establishing inside Israel a made-to-order fifth column. The Arab leaders continue to demand repatriation despite UN, American, and Israeli willingness to finance resettlement in amply available Arab territory under conditions which would immensely benefit the refugees and the countries absorbing them. These same leaders do virtually nothing to alleviate the wretchedness of their refugee kinsmen, and actually derive income from it through such devices as tariffs on food purchased and delivered for them by a UN agency.

NEVERTHELESS, the Israeli argument continues, the great powers persist in courting the Arabs as if they were trustworthy and desperately needed. Is it because the Arabs would otherwise run amok? Even in their threats the Arabs are unreliable, according to the Israelis. Before the General Assembly's vote on Partition, and later before the wide-

spread diplomatic recognitions of the new state, and later still before the admission of Israel to the UN, the Arabs blustered that they would break diplomatic and commercial relations with governments taking pro-Israeli action. The governments went ahead—and there were no ruptures and no boycotts. The late King Ibn Saud warned he would cut off the flow of oil to the United States: not a drop of oil has been lost. When Belgium and Sweden were competing for a valuable Arab contract, Belgium delayed recognition of Israel but Sweden gave it: the Arabs awarded the contract to Sweden. Most flagrant of all, the Arabs threatened horrendous consequences for West Germany if Bonn signed a reparations treaty with Israel: Bonn signed, but the Arabs have increased rather than reduced their zeal for political and economic relations with West Germany.

On the other hand, Israelis declare, the Arabs do get tougher when taken seriously or conciliated. Secretary of State John Foster Dulles's temporary move against American economic aid to Israel, made—perhaps inadvertently—shortly after the Kibya incident though really linked to the B'not Ya'akov water dispute, caused the Arabs to feel they could attack Israel when they pleased; for if she retaliated the U. S. would chastise her. The same effect resulted from the Security Council resolution that denounced Israel for Kibya but failed to denounce Arab provocation, or to call for peace negotiations. In fact, the net outcome of the Eisenhower administration's apparently benevolent attitude toward the Arabs has been more Arab stubbornness—and greater American difficulties—though many informed Israelis concede that Washington, for all its large pronouncements, has actually *done* very little to justify Arab hopes. Nevertheless, Washington now finds it necessary to stress to the Arabs a point that needed no affirmation two years ago: its belief in the need and certainty of Israel's survival.

What should the powers do to win the Arabs, if they are to be won at all? Talk straight and act firmly, the Israelis recommend. Britain, to begin with, is in the position to compel cooperation with Israel by Jordan, currently the chief troublemaker. Deprived of British funds, personnel, and support, Jordan is nothing, and would disintegrate. The truth is, it is guessed, that Britain

at times shows disfavor towards Israel simply in order not to be outdone in Arab eyes by the U.S. After thirty years' experience, the British have learned that appeasement of the Arabs won't work, as witness their present grimness in Egypt. But the U. S., Israelis think, seems to have taken up where Britain left off, and is repeating her mistakes.

Hypnotized by the fancied need for positive Arab friendship, Washington again and again holds back just when a strong stand could be decisive. Therefore, say the Israelis: dispel the Arabs' notion that the U.S. fears them. Make it clear that, if necessary, the West will go on with Israel alone. In the past, the Arabs have acquiesced when they had no alternative—as when they signed armistices with Israel. If they can again be confronted with no alternative, they may even make peace with Israel.

THESE current examples illustrate that “long-time” Israeli view which remains constant despite transitory events. There is a corresponding “long-time” American view. It admits, privately, that the Israeli case has a certain logic, but finds a serious flaw in the perspective: Israel sees clearly her own interests and grievances, but not the immensely larger frame in which the small Arab-Israeli conflict is set.

Israel is a pinpoint of territory with a population of less than two millions; the Arab world is almost a continent with more than 40 millions. Even if this mass were totally apathetic, it could not be ignored, nor could so huge a territory be treated as wasteland, the Americans point out. The people and the land are anything but apathetic. To test the soundness of Israeli assurances that firmness would bring tranquillity, one would have to risk the alternative possibility of conflagration. Such a risk is unthinkable.

The Israelis tell us to be stern, to use pressure, the Americans observe. But how? With what weapons? On whom? There once was a time when the Arab rulers could turn anti-Zionism on or off at will. They no longer enjoy such facilities for manipulating popular hysteria. True, Israel is a robust democracy, steadfastly on our side. By contrast, the Arab systems may well be decrepit, feudal, undependable. The paradox is that the democratic Israeli state would fall apart if out-

side aid were cut off—but the backward Arab states could in their misery go on forever without any aid at all. Israel's very dependence on Western help encourages the Arabs. They calculate that boycott and harassment may yet cause her internal collapse, especially if the West can be persuaded to abandon her. So long as Israel's economy requires American bolstering, the Arabs will go on hoping—and talking tough. As for aid to the Arabs, they themselves spurn it, the Americans protest. Their leaders consider us and our gifts suspect. They are obsessed with fear and envy of Israel. Rather than make peace with her, they are ready to contemplate committing class and national suicide by selling out to the Soviets.

The American view contends that the Middle East—with its oil, communications, and bases—is too vital to jeopardize for any consideration. The Arab world possesses an indispensable asset which Israel lacks: space. Space for large armies, space for maneuver. Yes, Israel has a competent little army—but in global arithmetic it is of importance only to Israel. "As far as sheer value of territory is concerned," General Eisenhower once said, "there is no more strategically important area in the world" than the Middle East. Soviet influence would be ominous, Soviet seizure catastrophic. Widespread disorders could sap the entire Western position. Therefore we must placate the Arabs.

THESE, then, have been the changeless positions of the United States and Israel since 1948. However, interim policies on both sides have often swerved from them.

For example Israel, though sure that the Arabs cannot be conciliated, has on different occasions offered to do so, notably in the refugee dispute: by expressing willingness to take back a limited but sizable number of refugees, to discuss compensation before a general peace treaty, and by actually beginning to repay money left behind in refugees' blocked bank accounts. Similarly the United States, while anxious not to alienate the Arabs, has objected strongly to such things as Egyptian interference with Israeli cargoes in the Suez Canal. At times the American position in the UN, as on the Jerusalem question, has been closer to Israel's position than to that of the majority of the membership, and has been outvoted. As far

back as during the Truman administration, the two governments were fairly agreed on what *should* be the settlements in the Jerusalem, refugee, Suez, and Arab-Israeli border-fixing disputes. The difference between them—and it of course was cardinal—was on how far to go in compelling Arab agreement as well.

It has not been generally noted that the Eisenhower administration has already made one tactical revision of fundamental significance that diminishes the projected role of the Arabs in Middle East defense. The change dates roughly from Dulles's visit to the area last summer. He went out seeking, as others before him, ways to bring the Arab states into some kind of regional security organization. He came home persuaded that—with one or possibly two exceptions—they were *for the time being* incapable of preparing any *active* defense against future Soviet aggression. Dulles had learned for himself that most of the Arab governments were too engrossed in hating Israel, too "neutralist" in the cold war, or even too amiably inclined toward Moscow. (The later fate of Naguib and Shishakli also showed him they were too unstable.) Of the two possible exceptions, Saudi Arabia seems more recently to have been scratched because of King Saud's excessive fulminations against Israel (tantamount to an appeal for Holy War) and certain disquieting views attributed to him concerning American oil contracts (reminiscent of Mossadegh). This leaves just Iraq. The cessation of efforts, even temporarily, to enlist the other Arab states in the Western defense system is seen—at least by Washington—as an important change in tactics in a direction desired by Israel.

BUT the Arabs, according to the classic American view, are still in the Middle East and still have to be courted. If they are not to be asked for active contribution to regional security, they must in any event be induced to refrain from hostility. To achieve this, the U. S. has now apparently taken up with renewed vigor the idea of improving the social and economic health of the Arab world through large American-financed development programs.

Since Congress is hardly likely to appropriate more for the Middle East in 1954-55 than in the current fiscal year, the Arabs

may get more, and Israel less, than hitherto. Even if Congress does not cut the \$130 million requested for next year, more than \$14 million of this is expected to go to Iran, Libya, and Ethiopia, leaving under \$116 million for Israel and the Arab states. The State Department is understood to be asking a free hand in allocating the balance, with a view to enabling larger Arab participation. This emphasis is justified in Washington by the following reasoning:

Since 1948 Israel has received just about as much in U. S. government grants (\$191.6 million) as all the Arab countries together (\$192.6), although the Arabs outnumber the Israelis thirty to one. Actually, the imbalance has been even greater in a sense, because Israel's share went entirely to her government, while only \$68.2 million went to the Arab governments, the UN having spent the other \$124.4 million directly on Arab refugees.

Israel admittedly has used her share well—so well, in fact, that her economy is now showing solid improvement. Aid to Israel may therefore begin to be shaved down. But the Arab territories continue to be sadly underdeveloped. The time has come for a major effort. In particular, there is urgent need to harness water resources in Lebanon and Jordan for power and irrigation. Plans are afoot for aid programs in Syria and Egypt too. All this, one American official has predicted, will “transform the Arab states out of recognition in the next five years.” The inference is the Arabs will become more sturdy and enlightened, and less inclined to sabotage if cold war emergencies should arise.

BEFORE examining the Israeli reaction to this, one might inquire why Washington should think that the Arab regimes are suddenly going to reverse themselves and become eager for the same American aid which for several years they have either been rejecting outright or accepting in only puny amounts. Or why, in the few places where fairly substantial American- or UN-financed projects have been allowed, one should count on brilliant results tomorrow when until today the native performance has been so sluggish. In a major speech this April, the Assistant Secretary of State for Near Eastern Affairs, Henry A. Byroade, spoke of a “general evolution” now occurring in his area, “whereby leaders are becoming more

responsive to the demands of public welfare.” Is there really “general” evidence of this among the generals, landowners, and effendis? And if, as in Egypt, one now hears much *talk* of economic uplift, do the meager achievements recorded there justify optimism for the future?

Further, Israel is not to blame if her government was willing to take responsibility for the integration of *her* immigrants, and therefore directly received United States grants to maintain them, while the Arab governments declined responsibility for the refugees on *their* soil, compelling the United States to send the aid through non-Arab channels. Incidentally, the immigrants were also “refugees,” about equal in number to the Arabs. And since when has the United States given her assistance according to size of population rather than need, capacity, and ability to use? There are fewer Greeks than Turks, but Greece has had more economic aid than Turkey. The yardstick has been economic, and Washington has never before suggested that a country which received less than another had the right to accuse the United States of being less friendly. As a matter of fact, American aid until now has gone to countries which, by definition, were presumably friendly. Can the Arabs, by any stretch of the imagination, be so described?

The Israelis wryly declare themselves “flattered” by American statements that they have employed United States aid well. They suggest that, if this is so, why reduce it prematurely and endanger the whole investment? For this fiscal year, Israel has received \$52.5 million from the Foreign Operations Administration. There is reason to believe that the State Department now wants to cut this down to thirty-five or even thirty millions. Such a slash, Israelis fear, would do much harm at a crucial moment. It may not be evident in Washington, but Israel has a considerable way to go before grants-in-aid can be sharply cut without hampering the pace of a development on which the United States itself has counted so much for the health and strength of a vital area.

As for increased economic assistance to the Arabs, the Israelis could hardly make legitimate objection, and they know it. Israel does not say the United States should withhold such aid—even though, in terms of power, improvement of the Arabs' economy

would clearly strengthen them vis-à-vis Israel. In fact, Israel has always felt that a prime reason for mass Arab antagonism to her is the plight of that mass. She would sincerely welcome, I think, any and all efforts to lift the Arab peoples from their misery and make them both less susceptible to anti-foreign hysteria and more inclined to good neighborliness. This has long been the view also of true friends of America in the Middle East, and of Israel's friends over here, including the most fervent American Zionists. The one kind of aid to the Arabs which Israel and her supporters do deplore is *military*. That is why there has been no protest against reported American plans for extra economic help to the Arabs—but an avalanche of protest against the recent decision to give arms to Iraq.

THE Iraqi military-aid program stems from the revision in American thinking mentioned above about regional defense patterns. Having discovered that the Arabs are generally "not ready" for alliance with the West, the United States has evolved a so-called "Northern Tier" formula. Instead of building *outward* by organizing the Middle East for defense as an ultimate target of Soviet assault, the new plan starts with the Soviet frontier itself and works *backward*. Thus Turkey and Pakistan become the core of the system, with northern Arab territory (Iraq) and oil fields (Saudi Arabia, in the first concept) on the fringe as a defensive extension.

The United States believes that the "Northern Tier" is a large concession to Israeli views. Earlier regional proposals—"Supreme Allied Command Middle East" (SACME) and "Middle East Defense Organization" (MEDO) — had been joint Anglo-American projects. They envisaged inclusion of *all* the Arab states, without any real indication of where Israel would fit. The new proposal is purely American in concept and financing, and excludes all the hostile countries on Israel's frontiers.

Iraq, the Americans point out, does not touch Israeli territory (nor does Saudi Arabia). This shows how sympathetically Israel's concern is taken into account in Washington. Iraq is sworn not to use the American-donated equipment except for defense against the Soviet. This has been

demanding by Washington as an ironclad precondition. Moreover, the amount of arms to be given is not serious. The bulk of a \$30-million fund at the State Department's disposal is for Pakistan. At most, only about \$5 million probably will be available for Iraq. There has been no Congressional or public clamor against the much larger program for Pakistan. Why all the excitement about Iraq? From the American point of view, the insignificant quantity going to this one Arab state makes the grant purely "symbolic." It is meant to serve notice on Moscow, not strengthen Iraq against Israel. So why worry?

AMERICAN critics of the State Department regard such arguments as hovering on naivety.

If the arms for Iraq are merely "symbolic," the critics contend, how are they ever going to impress the Soviet Union? Will not Moscow, on the contrary, regard the transaction as bluff? The Russians know, if the West has forgotten, that even an Iraqi army armed to the teeth would hardly slow one Soviet column. In World War II, the troops of the pro-Nazi revolutionary Iraqi regime folded up before a handful of British soldiers. The "arms for Iraq" policy is an invention, not of the Pentagon, but of the State Department, it is suggested—to conciliate the Arab world politically.

But a "symbol," though worthless against the Kremlin, can be deadly against Israel. It is all right to say that the U. S. is for peace in the Middle East. The question Israelis ask is: Are the Arabs for peace? Especially the Iraqis, who are perhaps the most venomously anti-Israel of all the Arab peoples, indeed the focus of anti-Jewish feeling in the region. Iraq went over to Hitler once, or tried to. After Israel's emergence, around 90 per cent of the Jews in Iraq fled while they could. Some who could not were hanged in Bagdad's public squares. Israeli passengers in an airplane making an emergency landing in Iraq were jailed and treated like criminals. As the loudest saberrattler against Israel, can Iraq be trusted with gifts of shooting weapons? If there is any "symbol" in the American plan, it is simply this: Iraq will take it as proof either that the United States can be beguiled into believing her pledges of peaceful intention,

or that the United States knows her real intention and doesn't care.

Arms to Iraq, Israelis say, strengthens the *Arab* (not just Iraqi) resolve to avoid a negotiated Israeli settlement. Encouraging the Iraqis would be troublesome enough. They do not border on Israel, true, but in the Arab war they contributed five regimental combat units and over one hundred armored vehicles which, while the Jewish defense was spread out, managed to cut Jerusalem's water supply and get within eight miles of Tel Aviv. What is ominous is that it is not Iraq alone but the Arab League which the U.S. is arming spiritually.

Against Israel the League performs like a team. Egypt's blockade at Suez, Jordan's refusal to obey Article XII of her armistice, Syria's meddling with electric projects—such obstructions, the Israelis emphasize, are due to the League, not the spasmodic malevolence of individual states. It is simply foolish to compare the cases of Iraq and Pakistan. In the latter instance, where India is the complainant against United States policy, Pakistan is smaller in land and population than India, is not at war with India, does not insist that she is at war with India, and does not periodically announce her intention to destroy India. Exactly the reverse of all this prevails in Iraq, and the U.S. in effect is telling all Arabs they may proceed in their vendetta against Israel and not distress the State Department.

And, the Israelis add, if Iraq is an ally of the United States, then what about arms for Israel too? Aren't we at least as good an ally? About two years ago, Israel submitted an arms-aid request to Washington. Though Israel was declared eligible to *buy* arms here the State Department took no action on the aid request, explaining that the United States had not yet developed a policy for arms grants to the Middle East. Well, say the Israelis, now you have a policy. If you give Iraq arms—is there no place in your policy for a grant of weapons to us?

ECONOMIC and military assistance to Arab states affects Israel, not directly, but because she is part of the Middle East. But other facets of American policy directly affect specific Arab-Israeli disputes. In this category, comprising such matters as the Jordan border and Suez, Israeli and American

policy have lately shown a trend, willy-nilly, toward mutual accommodation. Both sides have been learning that the Arabs are very, very hard to get along with.

The Eisenhower administration entered the Middle East with the firm belief that it could be pacified and organized by bold and sweeping approaches. Mr. Dulles learned that these were not advisable. He then tried the piecemeal method, attempting to patch one hole here, sew another there. This only made the Arabs more intransigent, particularly towards Israel. Despairing of swift solutions, the United States has since fallen back on a tactic of merely keeping things from getting worse. Only the other day Assistant Secretary Byroade publicly confessed that the possibility of a peace treaty "just does not exist." In the UN the United States has taken up a juridical position: let us all observe the legalities, respect the Charter, fulfill pledges, obey injunctions. This has brought American and Israeli lines superficially closer. The process has been aided by the Arabs, who are habitually belligerent and extreme—and by the Israelis, who have increasingly adopted a legal attitude inside the UN, however vigorous their conduct may have become outside.

Thus the Americans—and the British—have found themselves more and more arguing for the Israeli view. Once Israel had stopped defying the UN suspension order at the B'not Ya'akov diggings, the West was able to look into the case and see that the project was not, as the Syrians had claimed, a menace to Arab life and limb. It was Commissar Vishinsky, not Ambassador Lodge, who prevented the Security Council from achieving a decision. When Israel appealed against Egyptian defiance of UN orders on Suez, the West again had to take note, particularly since the British had their own reason for being unhappy over Suez. In the Jordan dispute the West supported the Israeli position that *all* aspects of border unrest be examined and that Israelis and Jordanians negotiate face to face, while the Soviets seconded the Arab refusal—for fear of being ultimately inveigled into a peace conference—to talk about anything except their own wounds.

Meanwhile, the Israelis have begun to realize that the present emergency is too desperate for total solutions, that small mea-

asures which may work are better than large ones which won't. In an earlier period, when the armistice agreements were more or less functioning, the Israeli objective was peace, entire and unqualified. The West was thought capable of compelling the Arabs to negotiate, and a final settlement was believed practical. The past months, however, have seen Arab truculence wax instead of wane. The Arabs have not only rejected a peace treaty, but have been retreating from the armistices too. Israelis are sure this would not have happened if U. S. policy had not inflamed Arab illusions. Now they would consider it an achievement just to restore order on the frontiers.

Israel would desire, among other things, extension of the 1950 Anglo-Franco-American guarantee against territorial changes by aggression to include a ban on other forms of violence such as border raids and economic hostility. She would like the United States to force the Arabs to help in solving the refugee problem (as suggested in a recent Congressional report). She observes that, if Egypt is allowed to continue the Suez blockade under cover of Soviet veto, it will be the sole instance of such tolerance of Soviet obstructionism in the non-Communist world. (Previously the West, when it has tried, has been able to circumvent Russian veto, as in Greece and Iran—and even in Syria and Lebanon, when Moscow vetoed a resolution facilitating withdrawal of foreign troops from those countries after World War II!) But peace is so remote that Israel would settle at this time for mere armistice enforcement.

RETURN to the armistices would be a harsh substitute for the real peace Israel needs. But it is nonetheless terribly important—not only for Jerusalem but also for Washington, which has lately expressed panicky fear of an Arab shift toward the Soviets. Without effective armistices, there is the danger—let it be emphasized here—of an *Israeli* outburst. If this occurs, the aftermath will make present Arab-Israeli friction seem trivial.

The incessant turmoil on the borders has worn Israel's patience down. When this happens in any country, the result is a move toward extremism—and increased strain among friends at home as well as against foes abroad. Israel is no exception.

Views on what to do about the Arabs have been varied and bitter. There has been a difference between the government's public statements and its discussions *in camera*; a difference between the civilian leaders and the military leaders; an even greater difference between responsible officials and public opinion—which has no responsibility and, in a democracy, submits to no controls. But the greatest peril of all is that these differences are now, dimly but perceptibly, beginning to fuse into agreement. If this process continues—and the persistence of Arab hostility under cloak of the armistices will make it continue—then even the armistices may be swept away.

The divergences in view and expression were already apparent after Kibya last October. In the UN, Israel expressed formal regret at the killing of Arab women and children. But in the Knesset, no orator dared, with the country listening, to denounce the attackers. In the cabinet, one faction regretted only that this raid by para-military Israeli frontier settlers had slipped out of control. Many other ministers, however, who had not been told in advance, were outraged by Kibya; even in Ben Gurion's own party, a caucus of Mapai ministers revealed shock. Yet no outward sign of backing down was ever made. The blot on Israel's name for civilized behavior—and on the Prime Minister's reputation for truthfulness as impugned in the Security Council proceedings—was allowed, almost casually, to remain.

Failure to offer a convincing explanation for Kibya (or any explanation at all to counter the unrestrained Arab charges during the first inarticulate days) was partly due to the ineptitude of the persons in Israel handling the government's press relations. But it gradually became apparent that it was also due to a defiant attitude at top level, combined with confusion and division down the line. Even weeks later, after the UN's bald denunciation of Israel, when the full story of Kibya could only have clarified the situation to Israel's advantage, this writer was denied clearance of the facts by highest authority. To this day there are cabinet members who have not yet been told exactly who attacked Kibya, how, and why.

More ominous was the temper in the streets. Some Israeli citizens expressed horror. More were sorry that innocent persons

had died. But most of them expressed no remorse at all—and even some satisfaction—over the attack itself: “How long are we to sit and let them slaughter us? It’s time we taught them a lesson. Is Jewish blood cheaper than Arab? If the Arabs want war, let it be war!” Later, the long UN wrangles, the speeches, resolutions, and voting, got little attention. The average Israeli just didn’t seem to care that his country was being condemned. If anything, he felt contempt for the impotence of a faraway conclave of diplomats eternally passing resolutions.

IN THE early post-Kibya period it was also possible to detect several basic differences on what to do next. The extremist view was voiced by the Herut party and other descendants of old fire-eating Revisionism, who called for counter-action as cynical and deliberate as Arab action but with more sweep and impact. It was charged that Kibya had been criminally bungled. The government should first have staged a demonstration by Israel’s border settlements *against* the Israeli government, including demands for reprisals and even clashes with police. Then the settlers could have roared across the frontier and wreaked systematic havoc, to be followed by official disavowal and the explanation that the settlers had been goaded beyond endurance. Then the world would, presumably, have sympathized with the embattled Israeli farmers—and the Arabs would have been stricken with dread, as at Deir Yassin.

Next came the army, less vociferous but not much less extreme. Top commanders were not prepared to recommend open attack in force on the Arabs—inviting possible UN sanctions and embroilment with the British through the Anglo-Jordanian defense alliance. But they were willing to contemplate calculated risks falling short of organized war. Many regretted that UN intervention in the Independence War had come so soon. “If we had just kept going a little while longer,” one officer told me wistfully, “we could have had Suez without any trouble. We could have cut out Jordan’s ‘Little Triangle.’ We could have reached the Litani River in the north. There was nothing in our way. We could have restored practically all of Mandate Palestine. And we’d have no problem now about secure frontiers or room for water-development programs. . . .”

The conviction was spreading among the military that the Arabs were heading for war. If so, shouldn’t Israeli policy be revised to take the inevitability of war into account? Wouldn’t it be desirable, even, to have the test come soon rather than late? I met no officer with doubts of victory. The problem seemed rather to be how to have war without starting it. It was hoped that the Arabs would oblige. In the interim, it was felt that all Arab outbreaks should be met by limited but swift and emphatic reprisal. There were even some who wanted authorization to smash into Egyptian-held Gaza or forcibly “straighten” the Jordan frontier. The military does not make government policy in Israel, but it is popular and has influence. There were enough civilian leaders too, in perhaps subtler manner, who envisaged similar tactics as the best reply to Arab terrorism.

In opposition to such “activities” were, first and least representative, the Communists and their followers, who automatically blamed “fascism” for the friction between the equally downtrodden Arab and Jewish masses. After them stood the sincere and near-saintly but numerically insignificant group around the magazine *Ner*, which advocates brotherhood with the Arabs and large concessions to prove Israeli benevolence. But the main effective opposition centered around those elements of Israeli leaders who considered the West’s good opinion and American friendship indispensable to Israel.

Especially to men dealing with the state’s economic problems, or with its foreign relations, American support was so obviously crucial that gambling with it for any restricted objective like free use of a river or reprisal against a raid seemed sheer irresponsibility. In particular, officials in the Foreign Ministry and diplomatic service—who understood international opinion best and were obliged daily to justify Israel’s behavior to her friends overseas—regarded the impatient military as dangerous romantics. What good would it accomplish to seek a violent solution? Granted that the situation was intolerable, would it be any less intolerable if an Israeli assault, such as a march into the Triangle, created a larger Arab irredentism, this time with the whole world behind the Arabs? And if the UN ordered the army to withdraw, what then?

THE selection of Foreign Minister Moshe Sharett to replace Ben Gurion, the departing prime minister, disclosed a major effort to install moderation in an office that had been previously distinguished for a boldness which many thought insufficiently aware of Israel's interests abroad. But conditions permitting a prudent policy have degenerated. Frontier disorder has multiplied. Temper inside Israel has risen instead of cooled. Activists have gained ground at the expense of the moderates, and even the latter have begun to turn. After Kibya it was still possible for an Israeli government to apologize to the world. But five months later, after the slaughter of eleven Israelis in a Negev bus and Arab incursions from all around Nahallin in Jordan, there was an undisguised Israeli assault on the Arab Legion and National Guard in that outpost—and there was no apology, nor was any apology possible. There is less and less attempt to minimize such reprisals as the “uncontrollable” response of private citizens provoked to fury by Arab assassins—and more and more impatience with armistice commissions. The sentiment is growing that, all else failing, prudence itself now dictates the frank use of force against force, or else the Arabs will get out of hand entirely. And as a plain political fact, any Israeli government that now tried a policy of the other cheek might shortly be put out of office. Its successor would be no comfort to the surviving advocates of moderation.

In the view even of those who make the United States the cornerstone of Israel's future, the deterioration of Arab-Israeli relations is due to the deplorable American penchant for encouragement of Arab intransigence. Washington's spokesmen in the UN may frequently take legalist positions on the Israeli side—but any benefit is erased by Washington's parallel practice of verbal rebuke for Israel. Such declarations—reinforced at intervals by positive acts like the Iraqi arms grant—feed Arab flames with every syllable.

What could the United States do at this late date, it is asked, to strengthen the moderates in Israel? Certainly not continue in the vein of recent State Department announcements, the moderates suggest. Not summon Israel to cease acting like a “conqueror,” as was recommended in one speech which the

Arabs waved aloft as proof of their charges. Nor advise Israel publicly to reassure the Arabs, by “correcting” her drive for immigration, that she has no expansionist dreams—thereby intimating to the Arabs that Washington agrees with them about alleged Israeli “imperialist” ambitions.

If anybody needs to be reassured today, the moderates observe, it is the people of Israel. They are beginning to suspect that the United States might consider Israel expendable if her disappearance would facilitate Arab cooperation. They are beginning to doubt that Washington would react with more than mournful regrets if the Arabs ever drove Israel into the sea. They want the United States to cease bewailing every Israeli violation of an armistice without stigmatizing, at least with equal energy, every Arab violation. They contrast the outcry over Kibya with the apathy over the Negev bus murders, the swift action against Israel at B'not Ya'akov with the lack of action against Egypt at Suez, or against Jordan over Article XII. They want the United States to worry less about losing ground with the Arabs and make the Arabs worry more about losing ground with the United States. If Washington can devise means to give large-scale aid to the Arabs, then Washington can also devise means to give them a sense of responsibility and bring them to negotiate with Israel. This will never be accomplished, Israelis are persuaded, unless the United States stops wavering and abandons a species of double-talk which convinces the Arabs that their hostility to Israel is sympathetically regarded in Washington as the natural yearning of a great and noble people for self-expression.

IT WOULD be rash to predict how far the Israelis, in their indignation, are prepared to go. From this distance, one can only note that an extreme solution would endanger everything achieved by Israel and the world's good will until now. But Israel would not be the sole loser. The breaking of the dikes around her would be a major defeat for Western defense in the Middle East. There is deadly historic irony in the prospect that the United States, by straining at all costs to win Arab stability, might lose the one element of stability which we truly possess in the Middle East.